1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

very often is, by divorce or death, or the movement of its members to a new place. While such changes occur, the household remains; its personnel may change, its landholdings may expand or contract, and its relations with other households through its household head may shift—but people see it as an organization in terms of which settlements are built into larger units; into wards, hamlets, villages, cities, and finally, the state itself.

The personnel of a household is based on that of the family, and generally moves through a cycle that may involve several alternatives to the usual pattern. Let us start with a couple. A young man marries for the first time, and in about sixty percent of the peasant cases recorded for three rural villages in Bornu, he brings his wife to the vicinity of his father's compound or moves into a section of his father's compound. If the latter is the case, he will move to his own compound close by after his own conjugal family (his wife or wives and children) increases in size either through the birth of children or the acquisition of more wives. When his own children grow up, his daughters leave to marry and return from time to time because of divorces or separation from their current spouses. Because many sons bring their wives to their father's household or close by, the original father finds himself the nominal head of a growing patrilocal extended family which, as we shall see in Chapter 6, can in time become a separate ward or sub-ward of the town. When the father dies, the oldest son or the most capable or successful of all sons takes over the compound of the dead father. Lands and goods are apportioned among the male heirs, although the person taking the father's role sometimes takes half the land and divides the rest equally among the living heirs. Thus in one case a man with three brothers took his father's fields and divided them in half. One-half he kept for himself, and the other half he split among the three brothers.

A problem that frequently emerges at this time is that of the mothers of half siblings—the wives of the dead man. The man who takes over his father's compound or household tends to install his own mother there as a dependent, since most old women are without husbands.[2] If she is a vigorous woman, she can become a powerful person in the household. Indeed in the royal household she has a special title, as we have seen, and was traditionally a noble-woman of great power. The other wives of the dead man must go and live with their own kinsmen, usually one of their sons. In one case this problem was intensified by the fact that the household head, a powerful political leader, had only one son and that by a concubine. When the present head dies, his senior wife, a woman of very powerful upper class affiliations will have to leave and her own slave—a woman very much junior to her—will be installed as the senior woman of the household. Such eventualities can cause tension between the members of any household who know that some day the power and authority relationships within the household will change hands.

In the same vein, siblings tend to drift apart after the death of their father. Even though they live close by one another, their unity and cooperation is not as great after the father's death as before. On the other hand, this can be ameliorated by social and economic factors which are important to keep in mind. Thus if a senior brother takes over a powerful political role, or a lucrative economic one, and

[2] As a woman approaches old age she finds it extremely difficult to remarry and thus most old women are resigned to being beyond the marriageable period of their lives.

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

must ask his permission to do anything. To be seen speaking to another man is grounds for divorce. On the other hand a divorced woman is free. She comes and goes as she pleases and speaks to whoever she pleases quite freely. Some women quite frankly remark that they prefer this status to that of marriage while others just as strongly remark that they would like to get a husband.

In summary, maturity is a time of achievement for men in which they become full-fledged members of their community. They marry, try to raise families, and become heads of successful and productive households. Women try to marry successfully and hopefully to have children. However, as I have pointed out elsewhere, tensions caused by the demands of subordination in their married role produce strains and rebelliousness that very often leads to the break-up of marriage.[3] In the final analysis the culture is androcentric; there are many means by which men can become successful—through their occupation, their associations with neighbors, relatives, friends, and important men, and through membership and finally headship of a household. In spite of a turnover in wives associated with the high amount of divorce, the household itself is a stable unit, although its personnel is not. On the other hand, it is the rare Kanuri woman who can achieve a successful adulthood. Many women are barren or have had children who have not survived. Very few women remain married to the same men all their lives and most have had one or more extended periods of being divorced and looking for a husband. By centering on men and emphasizing their needs and wishes, Kanuri culture has produced a strain on women that is a fertile field for changes when modernization produces the possibility of new goals for women and new means for achieving them.

Old Age

Old age is signalled in both sexes by the whitening of body hair even though other body characteristics may remain strong and healthy. For both old men and women this last period in life means that many of the obligations and responsibilities of adult life are slowly relinquished, although men generally feel that they belong to the adult roles much longer than women. As heads of households and office holders in governmental positions, men wield powers in a number of spheres and give these up slowly and reluctantly as old age drains away their energy and efficiency. Ideally in Kanuri culture a man should reach the golden years of his life in his old age. If all goes well he receives much respect; his work is carried on by descendants, and his position as a household head may have grown to the point where he is the senior authority among a group of households organized along the lines of a patrilocal extended family with clients, sons, brothers, and their wives and families looking to him for leadership. When he is very old and becoming progressively infirm, he lets many of these duties pass to mature members of the group. Even then they always consult him on decisions and pay heed to his wishes.

The reality in Kanuri society is often far from the ideal although the ideal is a very widely agreed upon goal. To obtain this most desirable position in old age a

[3] See Ronald Cohen, "Marriage instability among the Kanuri of Northern Nigeria," *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 63, 1231–1249.

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

man must have had a very successful life and belong to the upper ranks of society where power and wealth give him the opportunity to build up the necessary following during his lifetime. Peasants can achieve the ideal if they have through accident or a successful career been able to build up political and economic resources that enable them to maintain a growing compound. For those men who cannot obtain a position of semi-independent leadership in their old age, there is also the possibility of membership in someone else's organization. In this way a man can look forward to a secure position even though his own household as part of it is a very small one. For many other men old age brings neither leadership nor successful subordination. A son, friend, or neighbor may regularly help with the farm plot, or if less successful the man and perhaps an aging wife live alone in a small compound in their village. He is given some general respect as an older person. If he lives in the same community as his children there may be young grandchildren constantly around, and whether they live in the same community or not he may be fostering one of more grandchildren in his compound. Whatever the alternative, and unlike our own society, old age even at its poorest provides an accepted and respected place for old men.

Many old women after a number of divorces or the death of a husband with whom they have lived for many years do not or cannot marry again. This does not seem to be the case nearly so often for the men. If the woman has a son, he is expected to keep her in his compound which may have been the compound of her husband. If she has no son, she may stay in or near the compound of some other relative, including an ex-husband whom she refers to by using the kin term applied to "brother."[4] I have seen a few old women living alone in the compound of their dead husbands although, like old men, most of these seemed in constant touch with young children. Whether or not she is being supported economically by her relatives, any old woman in the lower ranks of society has an accepted role as a small retail seller who sits daily in front of the compound or small market stalls around the town, or near a well, selling a few ground-nuts, sundries, cooked food, or tobacco flowers for staining the teeth of women. Four old women in Magumeri, one of whom lived completely alone, had saved up money to buy themselves a native well, and these four supported themselves on a fairly steady income from the sale of the water. Such practices are not suddenly started; a woman raises extra cash throughout her entire life by petty trade or the sale of cooked foods and with the onset of old age she merely extends these activities into a full-time occupation.

Women from higher ranking households remain in the compounds of their sons or relatives. Very likely they have been secluded as young married women and this continues in their old age. The widow of a high-ranking man is on occasion supported in his compound by the heir to the household. However, if the new household head has his own aging mother alive, then it is more common for the widow to leave her dead husband's household and return to her own kin since her co-wife is now taking over the position of mother of the head of the household. Many of these upper class women have more capital than their lower class counterparts. This started with their dowry and may have been increased through inheritance and trade since the time of their youth. Such trade is carried

[4] The Kanuri use a single kin term to refer to brother, sister, cousins of any kind, and half brothers and sisters, although each of these can be distinguished if need be.

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

on by intermediaries because of the seclusion common among upper class women. If the activity has proven successful during their life it is carried on into old age, and if not then it is dropped. Thus old women, like men, in Bornu have a place in society. It is not generally a position of great authority, although there are some notable exceptions. Certainly, however, deference and respect for the aged is a universal feature of good Kanuri manners. Blessing the young is a cultural symbol of this respect. Old people bless young people when the latter go on trips or there is some special event such as a birth or the naming of a new baby. The seriousness with which such blessings are given and received is evidence of the importance placed on the special capacities of wisdom and propriety that the Kanuri associate with old age.

Death

Just as pregnancy marks the potential beginning of life, so death marks the end. The Kanuri have a quiet accepting attitude toward death; it is unpleasant, but it is always there. The high mortality rate for children, and the desirability that as many as possible in a community attend a funeral means that Kanuri adults attend many more of these ceremonies than people in western society. Thus death and funerals are much more commonly noted and accepted than in the United States where the entire subject is considered repugnant.

The Kanuri believe that going to funerals helps the deceased person to achieve paradise. The more prayers said by as many people as possible and as many religious leaders as possible, then the better are the chances of success. Indeed this is not only true in death but throughout life. People go to a particular funeral because the deceased was "a man of our town," or they attend one in another locality because the person was a relative or a friend. Not to go, even to the funeral of a very low status person of one's own village, is unthinkable. A high ranking official of Magumeri remarked at a funeral of a poor, very old, butcher that only twenty years ago he would not have shaken the hand of such a man, but times have changed. However, when asked whether he would have attended such a man's funeral in former times he looked incredulous; there could be no question about it if they were of the same community. Thus death ties a community together and expresses one's membership in it. No matter what other differences may exist between people, there is one occasion when the only criterion for active participation is a common residence in the same locality.

The compulsion to go to funerals is very strong. Thus a young woman who teaches in the Bornu secondary school system and is highly westernized in many of her attitudes told me that she had to go to a funeral about 100 miles away in the bush. This involved very uncomfortable travel by lorry, then a long horseback ride in the rainy season. However, she never once considered the possibility that she might not attend even though there was every likelihood she would miss the ceremony. Her relatives were having a funeral—therefore she must go; there was no choice although she preferred not to go.

Kanuri burial ceremonies themselves are held as close to the first morning after death as is possible. I observed only one exception to this rule; a very old man

000 near his house and help him farm.

In the towns, the situation is much more fluid, and wealth
591 differences are more pronounced. Consequently there is consid-
369 erable mobility and a greater tendency for sons to strike out
166 on their own. In addition, there is a constant stream of young-
183 er people moving from the villages to the towns and cities, and from one town to another. These conditions, taken together with the relaxed attitude which the Kanuri hold toward a standard rule of residence (that is, that ideally sons should live close to their fathers, though other forms are equally acceptable), would lead one to conclude that post-marital residence among the Kanuri exhibits a tendency towards initial patrilocal residence, particularly in the rural areas, but that neolocal residence is more characteristic of the entire society.

591
888 When parents grow old, a married son or married daughter
[592] can bring them to live in his or her home. A married son may build a house close to his own for his old parents to live in, and would supply them with food and clothing. A man may be required by the Alkali to send food to his old parents, but he is not forced to build a house for them close to his own.

4. The Family.

596
592 As is evident from the above discussion of postmarital residence, extended families when they do occur among the Kanuri, are exceptional since most frequently postmarital residence is neolocal. At certain times, as when a young married couple live

593
602
[586] The value placed upon maintenance of connection with her own family after marriage is given by women as one of the reasons for divorce - "he would not let me visit my family" - which indicates that this value is somewhat in conflict with the other value attributes of adult female behaviour during marriage. In some marriages of long duration and much mutual trust, the woman's visits to her relatives were observed to be a normal, accepted and non-conflicting part of her role as wife to her husband. However, most men are somewhat reluctant to allow their wives to visit relatives and try to discourage such activity. High ranking persons send along a trusted servant to remain with or near their wives during the entire term of
[152] absence from the compound. One informant, by no means an exception, became incensed because he heard that his wife (age about thirty-five, married and divorced several times before) who was travelling alone to Maiduguri to visit a sister, had stopped for two days in an intermediate town to visit other relatives and friends. A former husband of the woman lived there and the present husband was extremely worried lest his wife was having a licentious time while away.

Old Age

886 Old age is signalled by white hair for both sexes. Even though sexual potency may remain, this outward sign of white hair identifies the coming of the last period of life for both men (chiari,
888 old men) and women (kamursu, old woman). In both sexes old age means the relinquishing of some of the duties of adulthood though the man continues longer in his adult role than the woman. This is due to the increasing difficulty which an old woman finds in obtaining a husband if she has been widowed or divorced in later years. If she has a son he is expected to keep her in his compound; if not, she may

888 stay in or near the household of some other relatives including an
887 ex-husband whom she will refer to as "brother". Whether or not she
565 is being supported by a son, an old woman of the lower ranks has an
443 accepted role as a gurdoma, i.e. a seller of cooked foods, or even acts sometimes as a small retail trader who sits daily in the small stalls around the town, at markets, near wells, and sometimes attends nearby markets. Four old women in Magumeri (one of whom lived completely alone) had each saved or acquired enough capital (two to three pounds) to buy a well for herself, and through the sale of the water obtained a steady source of income. It is not meant to suggest that at some point in time women suddenly decide they are now old and become sellers of cooked food, or petty retailers of uncooked foods,
[434] and small sundries. All her life and increasingly so with old age, the peasant woman raises a little extra cash for herself by doing petty trading or obtaining some raw foodstuffs either from her own garden in the compound, or buying it with her own money and preparing it for sale in either the large weekly markets or a small daily market stall. With old age she merely extends this activity into a full-time occupation.

888
565 Women from high ranking households remain in the compounds of their sons or relatives who support them. A widow of a high ranking man is sometimes supported in his compound by the heir to the
888 house, who may be a brother of the dead man. More commonly she re-
565 turns to a household of her consanguinal relatives. Many of these
454 upper class women have some capital which started with their dowries, and may have been increased through inheritance and private trade during their lifetimes. The trade is often carried on by intermediaries (male servants of the household) due to the high incidence of

888 565 454 semi-seclusion among upper class women, and expands as the woman grows into old age.

888 In the case of a man, ideally he reaches the golden part of his life in old age. He is respected. His work is carried on by descendants, and his authority and senior position in a patrilocal extended family organization may have expanded to the point where he is the head of group of households, if his sons and junior brothers remain in or near his compound. At extreme age, with the progressive appearance of infirmity, he relinquishes many of his duties, and serves merely as an adviser who is consulted on most major decisions by his subordinates in the compound organization.

888 592 183 [596] The difficulty in the universal realization of this cultural ideal is its functional dependence upon residence patterns for its development. As we have seen the primary determinants in the structural cohesion of the patrilocal family organization are the elements of power and authority, which the individual householder is able to wield, manipulate and maintain during his active life, in contrast to the total distribution of power and authority in the society. [565] Thus, as in many other segments of Kanuri culture, the ideal goals are manifestly more attainable among the upper ranks of society than at the lower levels. However, many peasants, due to some mild good fortune which gives them just a slightly higher proportion of economic and/or political power than their dependants, find themselves approaching old age successfully as heads of patrilocal organizations in which they are the respected senior members. Contrarily, it is also considered good and proper behaviour to maintain a role of loyal subordination to a strong extended household organization. Attachment to a senior in the organization leads to expectations of political and

888 592 183 economic security for many men who are unable to achieve the more highly valued position of respected senior member of a compound in their old age.

Inheritance

428 The rules followed in inheritance are those of Maliki law,(1) and these are codified rules upheld in the courts when succession cases [613] are heard. In general property should remain within the agnatic lineage with preference given to seniority or linearity and male sex. The surviving male always receives two parts to every one given to the surviving female of equal relationship to the deceased. A wife is considered when a man has no children. She and her co-wives (if present) are entitled to one-third of the warata (inheritance) of her (their) dead husband, while the remaining two-thirds goes to the agnatic group. Thus, if a man has four wives and no children each is entitled to a fourth of the wife's third, i.e. one-twelfth of the estate. For wives this means in practice only a share of the movables, excluding land-use rights and the household immovables. If there are children a wife is not entitled by law to any of the inheritance, although it is customary to give her a gift of money if she is being [587] sent away from her dead husband's house by the surviving agnates. If none of the male children are her own then she has no longer any living connection with her husband's family unless she marries a brother, which is known but not practised. When a son is very young the closest brothers of the deceased, in order of seniority, get the largest portion of the inheritance and act as father to the surviving children. If a senior brother of the deceased survives him he must

(1) See Ruxton F.H., Maliki Law, 1916 (London).

882 will lead them to their adult roles in the socio-economic structure of
582 the society. Since boys do not marry until the end of this period, first marriages are much later for males as compared to females.

885 By maturity, the Kanuri mean several things. For a man it means that he is married, has a compound of his own, an occupation, the use of some land for farming, a recognized position in the community organization as the head of a household and some degree of independence. When some of these social attributes are lacking the person often refers to himself as a "small boy" no matter what his age. There is no one status term meaning maturity for females, although terms exist which define her status as a woman who has had a child or not, as middle aged, and so on.

888 Old age for women often means dependence upon her sons if she has any, plus some petty trade in order to help sustain herself economically. For men, old age can be viewed on a continuum running from the one pole of successful seniority achieved or ascribed during life, to its opposable and supportative complement, subordination. Some achieve their seniority, others support this achievement by acting as subordinates, sometimes only as stepping stones to their own growth in seniority, or at other times, as a life goal in itself. However, it should be remembered that all men, even the Shehu, are in some sense subordinate in the total social structure.

56 The discussion of stratification has been organized within a theoretical framework in which the complex differentiation of Kanuri society is classified into status dimensions. These are sets of agreed upon rankings of persons within some specified area of behaviour. For the present discussion the status dimensions of ethnic membership, occupation, birth ascription, wealth, and rural/urban status, have been considered in some detail.